



# Marketing Public Relations

A Marketer's Approach to  
Public Relations and Social Media

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# Chapter 6

## Non-media Connectors and Word-of-mouth



# Chapter Objectives

1. Explain what non-media connectors are and why they are important to marketers.
2. Explain why word-of-mouth is such a powerful marketing tool.
3. List and discuss the factors needed to create and sustain viral word-of-mouth for a product.
4. Describe reference groups and list some common examples.
5. Describe experts and opinion leaders and list some common examples.
6. Define “Citizen Marketers” and discuss the different types.
7. Discuss how blogs can be tools for media as well as non-media connectors, and how internally generated blogs can benefit a firm.
8. Explain the relative value of online versus offline word-of-mouth.

# Non-media connector

- A person who monitors, analyzes, and shares information about a product or industry. An NMC may be paid for her efforts, but she is not employed by a media organization.



# Sphere of Influence

- A term typically applied to nations, marketers use this term to refer to the audience that a connector reaches.



# Viral Marketing

- A marketing phenomenon that facilitates and encourages people to pass along a marketing message





# 5 Solid Rules of Viral Marketing\*

1. Capture the imagination by being fun or intriguing
2. The message must be based on an easy-to-use or highly visible product
3. Target well
4. Associate with credible sources
5. Combine delivery technologies

\* 2005 *Business Horizon's* article, "Controlled Infection! Spreading the Brand Message Through Viral Marketing," Angela Dobeles, David Toleman, and Michael Beverland

# Reference Groups

- Formal Organizations
- Informal organization
- Trade organizations
- Political parties
- The American Medical Association
- The Better Business Bureau





# Expert

- A person with education and/or experience in a particular field, who is, typically, not a journalist
  - Industry professionals
  - Self-proclaimed authorities



# Opinion Leader

- An individual whose attitudes, opinions, and behaviors greatly influence a group or society



Marketing to  
opinion leaders  
can boost  
revenues by an  
average of 18%\*

\*Research by Dr. Harikesh Nair, Stanford

# Citizen Marketers\*

- A hyperengaged consumer, not in the employ of any media outlet, freely giving a personal expression of the passion he or she has for a product or an industry
  1. Filters
  2. Fanatics
  3. Facilitators
  4. Firecrackers



# Filter

- A consumer who collects and shares traditional media stories, blogger's rants and raves, podcasts, or fan creations about a specific company or brand and then packages this information into a constant stream of links, story summaries, and observations

Citizen Marketer authors Ben McConnell and Jackie Huba describe the author of the blog **Starbucks Gossip** as a filter for those who love (or loathe) that famous coffee place.



# Fanatic

- A consumer who acts like a product evangelist by continuously monitoring and analyzing a brand, product, organization, or person and prescribing subsequent courses of action



# Facilitator

- A creator or facilitator of a community (usually online) designed either to be a de facto support group for customers of certain products or simply to bring fans of a given product together

[www.Minis2.com](http://www.Minis2.com) is a website for Mini Cooper lovers hosted by a car owner who wants to maintain an online community for other Mini Cooper lovers.





# Firecracker



- A consumer who creates a song, animation, video, or novelty that generates a lot of short-term interest in a product. This interest dies out quickly as the consumer goes on with her other work.
- Ben & Jerry's® held a contest to celebrate its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary by asking fans to send in 30 second videos.
- Other fans got to vote for their favorite video and the winner got to fly to Vermont for their Birthday Bash

# Citizen Marketers share...

1. *Personal expression.* Their opinions or journalism are their own and are designed to inform, entertain, or analyze a brand, product, or issue.
2. *Amateur status.* They are volunteers and are transparent about their motives and associations.
3. *Freely given.* Their work is not meant to steal money, time, or attention from the company of their affiliation. Rather they seek to enhance or improve the company or industry in question.

# Off-line Word-of-Mouth

- Information about products spread from consumer to consumer via face-to-face, telephone, or other non-electronic methods



# Concept Case 6.1: Falcon's Lair

## Non-media Connectors

1. Does this statement reflect The Falcon's Lair's positioning?
2. In your opinion, will this statement capture the attention of non-media connectors?

Explain why or why not.



# Concept Case 6.2: Falcon's Lair

## Word-of-mouth and Groups

1. Explain what you would do in order to engage these groups and encourage them to spread word-of-mouth.
2. If efforts with these reference groups are successful, are opportunities for involving the media likely to arise? Explain why or why not.
3. Create a similar reference group list for the hardcore hikers and climbers segment and answer questions 1 and 2 relative to that market.



# Concept Case 6.3: Falcon's Lair

## Looking to Experts

1. Discuss how The Falcon's Lair management might consider engaging each of these experts.
2. Explain the benefits and drawbacks of a regional establishment partnering with nationally recognized experts.
3. Will opinion leaders be useful in promoting The Falcon's Lair to this market segment? Explain why or why not.
4. Create a list of experts and opinion leaders who are suitable for the family and recreational hikers segment and explain why the two lists differ.





# Concept Case 6.4: Falcon's Lair

## Customer Evangelists

1. Recommend other elements that The Falcon's Lair can add to the "Best of the Nest Program" to support word-of-mouth. Explain your recommendations.
2. In your opinion, is online or offline word-of-mouth more important to The Falcon's Lair? Why?



# Reflection Questions

1. Compared to news media, advertising media provide a marketer with much more control over messaging. What are some ways in which such control can be helpful and how can it hinder a marketer?
2. Discuss how a medium's format is related to the demographics of its audience.
3. Why is building relationships with journalists beneficial to marketers, and why is ethical behavior important in these relationships?
4. Explain how the principle of journalistic ethics affects the Marketing Public Relations professional.
5. Why would an article written by a company executive be more effective in achieving the firm's marketing objectives than an advertisement?
6. How has media convergence changed how marketers have to think about media?



# Practice Portfolio

- **Write a short statement describing how your product is fun or intriguing and explaining why, in general, NMCs need to share your story with their audience.**
- **Using the target market you defined in Chapter 4 as your guide, list the types of reference groups you might use to reach your audience. List an example of each.**
- **Explain how experts and opinion leaders influence your target market during the buying process. Give an example of an expert and an opinion leader whom you believe will influence this audience.**
- **Devise a preliminary plan for creating online and offline word-of-mouth using Citizen Marketers by explaining how you can get people to spread the message about your product.**